The impenetrable certitude of the semiotic drunkard

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It is no longer a matter of speculation, but of daily spectacle, that our species has traded in the burdens of consciousness for the easier labor of delirium. We are surrounded by semiotic drunkards. Creatures who stagger through existence drenched not in wine or whiskey, but in the fermented runoff of slogans, identities, partisan catechisms, and whatever linguistic moonshine their favored prophet has poured into a camera that morning. Indeed, the modern citizen has mastered the art of maintaining a permanent, devotional stupor. He wobbles on the stilts of his convictions, slurs his secondhand certainties, and regards anyone speaking soberly with the same bleary suspicion a drunk reserves for the man trying to take his keys.

Had this affliction been limited to a few eccentrics, those picturesque town lunatics who shout prophecies at pigeons, I might have left it alone as one of the charming defects of humanity. But alas, the contagion has spread into a full-blown civilizational bender. The mass public is now so marinated in symbolic liquor that it can no longer distinguish hallucination from insight. They do not think; they reenact. They do not see; they interpret. They do not doubt; they worship. The tragic comedy is they parade this impairment around as “being informed.”

It would be unfair, I suppose, to condemn belief in general. Even the sober require a few working assumptions to get through life. The problem is the brand of belief favored today. Belief soaked in cheap emotional spirits. Belief that evaporates under scrutiny. Belief that grows louder as evidence shrinks thinner. Belief clutched not for truth but for the comforting anesthetic it provides. The semiotic drunkard latches onto symbols the way a dying man latches onto morphine, until the dose becomes the disease.

Anyone with the misfortune of engaging such a person in conversation quickly learns the hopelessness of the exercise. You offer them facts, and they flap uselessly at them like someone trying to swat a fly drifting through an alcoholic haze. You present a contradiction,

and they stare at you with the lawful astonishment of a cow witnessing an eclipse. And, most damningly, through the entire exchange you sense the tension in their posture. They are not listening, not even slightly. They are waiting. Waiting for the merciful moment when they may once again disgorge the pre-chewed platitudes with which they arrived. For them, dialogue is merely the brief pause between iterations of the same monologue. The notion that a conversation might alter the content of their mind is as intolerable as asking a drunk to consider water.

The most disturbing feature of this mass psychosis is the certainty with which it is performed. The semiotic drunkard does not merely believe; he radiates conviction. He is as confident as a man who has denied reality long enough to forget it ever contradicted him. Just as a drunk swears he's fit to drive while leaning sideways against the countertop, the symbol-inebriated insists upon his superior perspective while demonstrating none.

Such intoxication might burn itself out were it not for the professional class of symbolic distillers who keep the bottles full. Cable news personalities, livestream oracles, podcaster demagogues, and influencer messiahs are today's televangelists of derangement. They stand ready to anoint every grievance with revelation and every delusion with doctrine. They perform their liturgies with lacquered sincerity, dispensing intoxicating sacraments of fear, rage, identity, and cosmic certainty to millions of supplicants who tune in daily for their dose. Where earlier ages had priests, we have streamers; where churches once offered salvation, platforms now offer algorithms that adjust the strength of the symbolic liquor to guarantee lifelong dependence. And the congregants drink, and drink, and drink.

Literal drunkenness is scolded because it lowers productivity; semiotic drunkenness is praised because it increases compliance. To be permanently soused on ideology is to be regarded as "principled." To be belligerent with borrowed moral fervor is to be considered "passionate." The more one's reasoning falters, the more applauded one becomes for "standing firm." The entire social order is structured to ensure that the drunkest are the loudest, and the loudest are the most credible.

Thus, the public square resembles a bar after midnight. Every corner filled with bellowing factions, each clutching its bottle of slogans, each incapable of hearing anything but the

echo of its own intoxication. They hurl their favorite phrases at one another like empty bottles; often missing, sometimes connecting, never enlightening. The result is a kind of harmonized delirium. An orchestra of the belligerently oblivious. A chorus of synchronized absurdity.

These individuals do not defend beliefs; they defend their right to remain delirious. Challenge their symbol of choice and they respond as a drunk does when you knock the bottle from his hand. First with confusion, then with indignation, and finally with a kind of religious fury. They do not fear error; they fear clarity. Clarity demands sobriety, and sobriety demands responsibility, neither of which the semiotic drunkard has any appetite for.

Still, institutions rely upon this mass intoxication. A sober public would be catastrophic. Perceptive, unpredictable, and unwilling to be herded, a sober mind does not cling to identity for belonging or ideology for comfort. It hesitates, reflects, and questions, qualities incompatible with the smooth functioning of propagandistic machinery. Thus, the distilleries of symbolic alcohol, our media, content factories, political performances, and influencer cults, operate around the clock, ensuring no citizen need face the world with a sober, unclouded mind.

Yet, a few stubborn individuals insist upon sobriety. They wander among the revelers like ghosts of clarity, noting with tragic composure the swaying mobs around them. They speak plainly, and the drunkards recoil as if struck. They refuse to drink, and the crowd glares at them with a hatred typically reserved for heretics. Their sobriety is a mirror in which the drunkards glimpse, however briefly, the grotesque spectacle of their own delirium. The sober are despised not for what they say, but for the offense of being awake.

Sobriety cannot be imposed. No man abandons his bottle until the bottle abandons him. The semiotic drunkard will remain delirious until his symbols fail him, until the story turns to ash in his mouth, until the identity no longer protects him, until the worldview he clings to cracks under the weight of reality. Only then, in the quiet horror of the philosophical hangover, does he confront the truth. He has been drunk for years.

Unfortunately for the symbol-inebriated, a civilizational dawn approaches. The slogans are weakening. The prophets are contradicting themselves. The symbolic brew is thin and

tasteless. The followers scream louder, not out of strength but desperation, like revelers shouting over a jukebox about to die. Everyone senses, on some instinctual level, that the lights are about to come on. And the lights always come on.

When they do, the semiotic drunkards will stumble into the harsh morning. A world unmoved by their hallucinations, indifferent to their volume, and impatient with their excuses. Some will curse the brightness. Some will accuse others of ruining the night. A few, trembling with the first pangs of sobriety, will recognize the ruin they've made of their own minds. The hangover will be catastrophic, but it might also be the first authentic contact with reality this civilization has had in generations.